

REMARKS

I. Status of the Application.

Claims 1-27 were pending in the application as filed. As of the date of the Office Action, Claims 21-23, 25 and 26 had been withdrawn from consideration.

In the Office Action, the Examiner:

(a) Rejected Claims 1, 6-10, 13, 15, and 17-19 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,896,004 to Feldman et al. ("Feldman");

(b) Rejected Claims 2, 4, and 5 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Feldman as applied to Claim 1, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,824,130 to Oga et al. ("Oga");

(c) Rejected Claim 3 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Feldman as applied to Claim 1, in view of Oga as applied to Claim 2, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,680,005 to Soules et al. ("Soules");

(d) Rejected Claims 11 and 12 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Feldman as applied to Claim 7, in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,617,659 to Okubo ("Okubo");

(e) Rejected Claim 14 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Feldman as applied to Claim 13, in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,696,788 to Lapatovich et al. ("Lapatovich");

(f) Rejected Claim 16 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Feldman;

(g) Rejected Claim 27 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Feldman in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,603,277 to Imamura et al. ("Imamura"); and

(h) Objected to Claims 20 and 24 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but indicated that Claims 20 and 24 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all limitations of the base claim and any intervening claim.

II. Response.

In this response, Applicants respectfully: (i) amend Claims 20 and 24 into independent form, including all limitations of the base claim and any intervening claim; (ii) amend Claims 2, 6, and 13 to depend from amended Claim 20; (iii) cancel previously withdrawn Claims 21-23, 25, and 26, without prejudice; and (iv) cancel Claims 1, 19, and 27, without prejudice.

The cancellation of Claims 1, 19, and 27 does not constitute an agreement by Applicants with any grounds of rejection offered by the Examiner in the Office Action or in a any previous office action. Applicants reserve the right to present all cancelled claims in a continuing or divisional application.

Claims 2-18, 20, and 24 remain in the Application after these amendments.

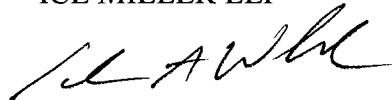
CONCLUSION

It is respectfully submitted that Applicants have made a patentable contribution to the art, and that this response places Claims 2-18, 20, and 24 in condition for allowance or in the alternative that this response places the Application in a better form for appeal. Favorable reconsideration and allowance of this Application is respectfully requested.

In the event Applicants have inadvertently overlooked the need for payment of any fees, Applicants authorize any deficiency to be charged to deposit account 09-0007. When doing so, please reference the above-listed docket number. If there are any other objections or rejections, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned to discuss the Application.

Respectfully submitted,

ICE MILLER LLP



Thomas A. Walsh,
Attorney No. 45,196
ICE MILLER LLP
One American Square, Suite 3100
Indianapolis, IN 46282-0200
Telephone: (317) 236-2100
Facsimile: (317) 592-5453

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